

In Sickness and In Health

by Katsu

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Summary: I can't really describe this story except to say that it's the hardest, most difficult thing I have ever written--my testimony that the world is never fair using Gundam Wing as a vehicle.
(rewrite)

In Sickness and In Health

Written from four different viewpoints, watch for changes. Not all

>
characters get equal time.

>
P

>
Thanks for everyone that answered my macabre questions,
especially my Evil

>
Twin MnM. Without her, I couldn't have written a great deal of
this. I

>
couldn't have made myself write a great deal of this.

>
P

>
I researched for this as best I could, but if I get a few
details wrong on a

>
medical standpoint, again, please forgive me. It's a hard thing
for me to

>
find a balance between dramatic license and medical fact. In
most cases, I

>
tried to choose medical fact over dramatics.

>
P

>
This was an extremely difficult story for me to write.

Hopefully, it's worth

>
it.

>
P

>
"Hand fits giving so do itbr

>
That's what the Gospel said to mebr

>
Life fits living so let your judgements gobr

>
That's how our future should be..."br

>
 (~Excerpt from "Sky Fits Heaven" by Madonna)

>
P

>
centerb~In Sickness and In Health~/b/center

>
P
>
[Trowa]
>
P
>
/It's over./
>
P
>
The words echoed in my mind like the ringing of bells or the sweet strains
>
of Quatre's violin.
>
P
>
/It's over./
>
P
>
The war was over. I didn't have to kill any more. I didn't have to hurt any
>
more.
>
P
>
/It's over!!!
>
P
>
Perhaps, I didn't have to hurt myself any more. Perhaps, I would have the
>
chance to heal, to cleanse some of the stains from my soul. With Quatre. He
>
had promised, in his own way, to help me. I wasn't certain if I could bring
>
myself to allow him to do so...but I would try. For him, I would try. For
>
myself, I would try.
>
P
>
We all landed at the same airfield. In the distance, there were cars coming
>
toward us, presumably filled with military personnel and government
>
officials, or perhaps reporters. I didn't really care; I intended to be
>
safely out of sight before they arrived. For at least a few minutes,
>
however, we had the airfield to ourselves.
>
P
>
Duo was the first one out of his Gundam. I could hear him yelling as I
>
jumped to the ground, letting out joyful whoops that neared hysteria. A
>
small smile slipped out to tug at my lips. Heero and Wufei dropped down to
>
the concrete runway shortly after. As I walked toward them, Duo pounced on
>
Wufei, since he was the nearest to him. Wufei shouted, but he made no effort
>
to escape Duo's enthusiastic embrace. As soon as Heero approached the two of
>
them, Duo released the Chinese pilot and tackled his lover, taking them both
>
to the ground. My smile widened.
>
P
>
"Trowa!" Wufei yelled, "It's over!"
>
P
>
"Yes," I said. "It's over." I glanced toward Sandrock. The hatch was open,
>
but Quatre still hadn't come out. Duo untangled himself from Heero and
>
grabbed my hands, spinning me around and around.

>
P
>
"Tro! Man! It's OVER! OVER!!!" He sang out. Then he was gone, once more
>
tackling Heero, who had just begun to stand up.
>
P
>
I looked at Sandrock again. The Maganacs would probably be arriving soon, to
>
whirl us off to a celebration. The war was over.
>
P
>
Quatre was still in his Gundam.
>
P
>
I walked away from the other three pilots, then broke into a jog as I saw
>
Quatre appear in the hatchway. He seemed to be having a problem; he was
>
clinging to one of the handles by the hatch, and he was carrying himself
>
strangely. I stopped when I was nearly underneath him. "Quatre?" I called.
>
P
>
"Hold on a second..." his voice sounded odd.
>
P
>
"Are you all right?" I asked, beginning to feel alarmed.
>
P
>
He relaxed his grip on the handle and began to lower himself toward the
>
ground. "I'm okay. Don't worry."
>
P
>
I nodded despite the fact that I knew he couldn't see me, not feeling
>
reassured. He climbed down the side of his Gundam, instead of jumping down
>
like he normally did. When he was about halfway down to the ground, he
>
paused for a moment, and his hand slipped, and he fell.
>
P
>
I had been half expecting something like that. I caught him with no
>
difficulty. "Quatre! Where are you hurt?" I asked. His face was pale, the
>
skin drawn tight against his delicate bones.
>
P
>
He shook his head. "I'm not hurt." he said. "I just...I...have a
>
headache...I must have gotten dizzy. I'm sorry..." he smiled at me and
>
closed his eyes for a moment. "You always save me." he murmured.
>
P
>
My worry drained away. We had been pushing ourselves ruthlessly for unending
>
months, and Quatre was no exception. Perhaps now that the war was over, he
>
had relaxed enough to allow himself to feel tired. "It's over." I said,
>
smiling.
>
P
>
"Yes." The word was a sigh of happiness. "Um...Trowa, you can put me down."

>
P
>
I nodded and set him on his feet. Immediately, he stumbled, and I grabbed
>
his arms. "Quatre?"
>
P
>
He was still smiling. "It's over." he said. His pale face
contorted in a
>
grimace of pain and he coughed just once, then took in a deep
breath. As if
>
that had been a signal, he began to cough again, and this time
he didn't
>
stop.
>
P
>
I went cold. My hands were soon all that were keeping him
upright, and I
>
quickly lowered us both to the ground. I held him against me and
felt his
>
forehead; he didn't have a fever.
>
P
>
Quatre's eyes were wide and frightened. I was frightened, as
well. I
>
couldn't begin to think what to do...I couldn't THINK at all. I
pulled my
>
hand away from his forehead as he managed to pull in a deep
breath, and then
>
coughed, very thickly. Something wet spattered on my hand...

>
P
>
There was blood on my hand. I yelled for help as loudly as I
could.
>
P
>
centerb* * */b/center
>
P
>
[Duo]
>
P
>
Twenty steps from the front of the teeny tiny hospital room to
the back.
>
Turn around, rinse and repeat. And again. And again.
>
P
>
I could feel Quatre's eyes on me as he watched from the hospital
bed. We'd
>
taken turns staying with him once the doctors got done with the
barrage of
>
tests they put him through. We were still waiting for the
results. Trowa had
>
finally succumbed to sleep deprivation, and I'd bundled him into
a cab and
>
sent him home. He hadn't wanted to go. Quatre coughing up blood
had really
>
made him wig out. I'd have to say I didn't blame him. It had
scared the piss
>
out of me, and I hadn't been the one holding him.
>
P
>
I stopped and glared at the wall, willing it to move. It didn't.
I went back
>
to pacing.
>
P
>
"Duo..." Quatre said, his voice tired.
>
P
>
"Yeah?" Turn around, repeat. I'd managed to sit still in the

chair by

>
Quatre's bed for a grand total of seven minutes before I
couldn't stand it

>
any longer. I hate not having anything to do. Not that pacing
was a lot

>
better, but at least I was moving.

>
P

>
"You don't have to wait around...I'm fine..."

>
P

>
I knew I was driving Quatre nuts, but I couldn't help it.

Damnit, I was

>
worried! "You know, Quatre, I bet you'd say you were fine even
if you were

>
trapped under a fallen building and trying to saw off your own
leg." *That*

>
made him think for a minute.

>
P

>
"Probably." He finally agreed.

>
P

>
"I'm not going anywhere until a doctor-type comes by and tells
me that

>
you're going to be fine." I said. "You really scared the shit
out of all of

>
us."

>
P

>
"Sorry. It wasn't as if I was trying to."

>
P

>
I grinned at him. "Aw, admit it, Quatre. You were just trying to
get out of

>
having to get your picture taken with five billion politicians."

>
P

>
He smiled back at me. It was nice to see him smile, but he was
still too

>
pale.

>
P

>
Someone knocked on the door. I let them in--it was the doctor,
and he was

>
carrying a thick manila file folder. His smile was a little too
cheerful, a

>
little too professional. The room was suddenly very cold.

>
P

>
"Ah, Mr. Winner...I was hoping that you'd still be up." the
doctor said. "I

>
need to talk to you about the results of your blood test." his
eyes flicked

>
toward me.

>
P

>
Quatre saw. "Duo is one of the other pilots." he said, smiling
at the

>
doctor. "I asked that one of them be allowed to stay with me all
night if

>
they wanted. Anything you have to say to me, he can hear."

>
P

>
The doctor nodded and sat down at the foot of Quatre's bed. I
immediately

>
sat down as well, on the stupid, hard wood chair that was by the
bed. It was

>
impossible to get comfortable on. I hate having a bony butt.

>
P

>
"Mr. Winner, may I call you Quatre?" the doctor waited until Quatre nodded

>
before continuing, "I have the report on the blood tests we ran on you

>
earlier." he paused as if to collect his thoughts. "The results are

>
abnormal."

>
P

>
A shock ran down my spine. Quatre didn't get a chance to say anything,

>
because I jumped right in. "Abnormal as in how?" I demanded.

>
P

>
The doctor shot me an unreadable look. "The white blood cell count is much

>
too high. Nearly thirty times higher than it should be."

>
P

>
My stomach clenched, and I mentally hissed at it to stop that. I know squat

>
about medical tests. I had no reason to be worried. Really. Doctors come and

>
talk to their patients personally all the time. Shit. "What does that mean,

>
exactly?" I asked.

>
P

>
"We can't be certain without more tests." the doctor said.

"We'll need to do

>
some more blood work tomorrow, and perhaps a biopsy."

>
P

>
I looked at Quatre's pale face, and was suddenly very, very afraid.

>
P

>
centerb* * */b/center

>
P

>
[Trowa]

>
P

>
I lay and bed and stared at the ceiling, just as I'd been doing since Duo

>
had shoved me into a taxi and sent me back to the hotel. I should sleep, I

>
knew, but I couldn't. I was too afraid. My stomach was churning, murmuring

>
acidly at me. I couldn't help but remember, over and over, how light Quatre

>
had felt in my arms. Too light, now that I began to think about it. He'd

>
never felt that frail before, when he'd embraced me. I couldn't help but

>
think about how he had been shaken by the coughs that he couldn't stop.

>
P

>
My hand clenched itself into a fist as I continued to stare silently at the

>
ceiling. When we'd gotten to the hospital and Quatre had been rushed off for

>
a battery of tests and medication, I'd calmly gone to the

bathroom and

>
washed my hand, scrubbing it until all the blood was gone.

>
P

>
It was still there, though, I could feel it.

>
P

>
I wasn't going to get any sleep.

>
P

>
centerb* * */b/center

>
P

>
[Duo]

>
P

>
My turn for Quatre watch again. I'd volunteered for the shift after Wufei's

>
this time. When I got in, Wufei was clearing up the remains of a game of

>
Xiangqi[1]. Quatre smiled brightly at me. We talked for a long time, about

>
stuff I don't even remember any more. The war, mostly. What we would do now

>
that it was over. Quatre said that he wanted to devote himself to his

>
father's companies. I asked him if he was planning to save some time for

>
Trowa. That got a nice blush out of him.

>
P

>
It was probably right about midnight when the doctor came back. He sat down

>
on Quatre's bed. He wasn't smiling.

>
P

>
Shit.

>
P

>
"Quatre, I just received the results of the tests we ran early today." he

>
said without preamble. "Do you want to hear them now?"

>
P

>
Quatre nodded. I reached out and touched his shoulder.

>
P

>
"There's no right or easy way to go about saying this, Quatre, and I think

>
you'd like to hear everything straight and unadorned, correct?"

>
P

>
Quatre nodded again, his face taking on an expression of detached calm.

>
P

>
"The biopsy confirmed our original fears. It's leukemia." the doctor licked

>
his lips nervously. "Lymphoblastic, acute, very late stage."

>
P

>
Quatre made a very small, distressed noise, and I looked down. My hand had a

>
white-knuckle grip on his shoulder. Through an act of sheer will power, I

>
loosened my grip. I'd heard of leukemia before. Cancer. Fuck.

>
P

>
Dimly, I heard Quatre ask, "How late?"

>
P

>
"Very. You should have been exhibiting symptoms for at least the past month." the doctor said. "If you'd come in before now..."

>
P

>
"There wasn't time." Quatre said, as if he'd been expecting to hear that. I

>
looked at him sharply. He'd been feeling sick for the past month, and he

>
hadn't even told anyone. Suddenly, I was very, very angry, though I wasn't

>
sure at what or who. Quatre kept speaking, like it didn't matter. "How

>
long?"

>
P

>
"Wait a minute!" I yelled. "What the hell do you mean, how long? Are you

>
planning to die or something? Don't be stupid." I looked at the doctor.

>
"Tell him to stop being so stupid, doc. Doc?" The doctor only shook his

>
head.

>
P

>
"I'm sorry." he said. "We'll still try chemotherapy, to see if we can force

>
the disease into remission...if we can, then there is the possibility of a

>
bone marrow transplant, and we can hope that the cancer hasn't metastasized

>
[2]. But if it doesn't work..." he didn't finish the thought. He didn't have

>
to.

>
P

>
"How long?" Quatre asked again. He sounded calm. Way too calm.

"Please just

>
tell me."

>
P

>
"Three weeks, perhaps." the doctor sighed. "I'm sorry, Quatre."

>
P

>
It was too late. Too fucking late. I wanted to scream.

>
P

>
"We'll begin chemo tomorrow, Quatre." the doctor said. He stood and patted

>
Quatre on the head like he was some kind of kid that didn't know what was

>
going on. "I'll see you in the morning." I decided that I hated the doctor.

>
He'd said that Quatre was going to die.

>
P

>
Going to die. I repeated the words in my mind. They sounded like a foreign

>
language.

>
P

>
By the time I had myself sorted out, the doctor was gone and Quatre was

>
staring blankly at the ceiling. I made myself grin at him. "Eh, well, you

>
know doctors, they're pessimists. You're going to get better."

>
P
>
Quatre blinked and looked at me. "Of course." he said. "Duo, what's Trowa
>
going to do?"
>
P
>
"I don't know." I said, "but Trowa's a big boy. He can take care of himself
>
on this one, I bet. You just concentrate on yourself."
>
P
>
Quatre turned away from me so that he was lying on his side.
"I'm tired,
>
Duo. Would you mind letting me sleep?"
>
P
>
His flimsy hospital gown had slipped over one shoulder. There was a large,
>
ugly bruise there now, where I had grabbed him. I stood. "You're going to be
>
ok, Quatre."
>
P
>
"Good night, Duo."
>
P
>
"Yeah, yeah, good night. One of us'll be here in the morning."
then I was
>
out of the room. The door clicked shut behind me as I headed for the
>
hospital doors. I could feel my grin still fixed on my face. It felt stiff
>
and unnatural.
>
P
>
Quatre was going to die.
>
P
>
I could hear myself panting, like I'd been running a marathon or something.
>
I stumbled diagonally across the darkened hallway until I hit one of its
>
sterile white walls, and I leaned against it, my breath coming faster and
>
faster. I was making little panicked whimpering sounds. It wasn't real. It
>
wasn't real. It wasn't real...
>
P
>
The next moment, I was on my knees on the cold tile floor, throwing up my
>
breakfast, lunch and dinner. When I was done, I wiped my mouth on the back
>
of my trembling hand.
>
P
>
"Oh Jesus, kid, are you ok?" Someone grabbed my arms and pulled me up, away
>
from the vomit splattered across the floor. He was wearing a white lab coat.
>
P
>
I lost it. "NO!" I screamed. "I'm not ok!" I hit him, but my hands were
>
shaking so badly that there wasn't any force behind the blow. He looked
>
stunned. "NOTHING is ok! It's never going to be ok! NEVER!" With each word,
>
I hit him again, more weakly each time. "It's not fucking ok!"

>
p
>
I couldn't cry.
>
p
>
That was ok, though, because boys don't cry, do they.
>
p
>
centerb* * */b/center
>
p
>
[Trowa]
>
p
>
Quatre smiled up at me from the hospital bed. The sheets were
fresh, very
>
clean and white. Quatre looked lost in them, washed out,
smothered. I
>
offered him a small smile in return as I reached out and gently
took his
>
hand. There were still bruises on his arms from when I had
caught him, and a
>
new one that Duo had caused. The slightest pressure on his skin
would cause
>
an ugly purple welt, marring his perfection. I didn't want to
risk it. I
>
didn't want to hurt him.
>
p
>
When had he gotten to be so thin? He'd never been large, I knew,
but he'd
>
also never been quite so delicate, like a thinly spun glass
sculpture. He
>
was fading. I could think of no other word for it. Every day, he
was a
>
little more ethereal, as if the only reason he remained solid
was through
>
sheer strength of will.
>
p
>
His smile never faded, though. I knew that he remained cheerful
for us, and
>
for himself. Wufei, perhaps, would have shouted and cursed; Duo
would have
>
become even more manic; Heero, I think, would have borne it
stoically like I
>
would. Only Quatre could remain this cheerful when facing an
end. Only
>
Quatre was that strong.
>
p
>
There was a bulge in the flimsy hospital gown, near his heart.
They'd
>
implanted a catheter there, so they could more easily administer
the
>
chemicals that they were treating him with. I couldn't make
myself look at
>
it; it was too personal. Cancer had already invaded him; now the
doctors
>
were following suit.
>
p
>
My life was slowly becoming one large, empty ache, all of my
feelings and
>
strength, and my self being slowly sapped away by something that
I could not
>
even begin to name. I could tell by the way the others looked at
me that
>
they could feel the pull of the black hole that was building

itself inside
>
of me.
>
P
>
We no longer talked during my visits. Neither of us had anything left to
>
say. Most of the time, Quatre was asleep, anyway. He was on a great deal of
>
pain medication; the cancer had begun to spread to his lungs and his bones.
>
I would watch him sleep and hold his hand, not letting go until one of the
>
others came and chased me away, telling me that I should sleep.

>
P
>
But I would never let go.
>
P
>
centerb* * */b/center
>
P
>
[Duo]
>
P
>
I don't know what the other guys are made of. They took it so fucking
>
calmly. Wufei and Heero said nothing after I had told them the estimate of
>
three weeks. Trowa hadn't said anything to begin with. He'd just gotten up
>
when it was done, and gone and made dinner.
>
P
>
A dinner that none of us ate, now that I think about it.

>
P
>
I wanted to scream, and yell, and find something to kill. It was too
>
ridiculous. The war was over. We didn't have to die any more. And then there
>
was Quatre, dying in the hospital, and Trowa got up and went into the
>
kitchen to make us all ramen. It was too fucking ridiculous.

>
P
>
centerb* * */b/center
>
P
>
[Heero]
>
P
>
"How are you feeling?" I asked Quatre as soon as Wufei had left the room.
>
They'd been playing XiangQi again.
>
P
>
"I've felt better." Quatre said.
>
P
>
I nodded. I was the only one that would ask him how he was feeling, any
>
more. Perhaps the others were afraid of how he would answer. I suppose I
>
should have felt honored that he answered me honestly. Instead, I felt
>
nothing at all. Soldiers have no feelings.
>
P
>
If I told myself that enough, I would believe it. I was becoming my mantra.

>
P
>
I sat down on the wooden chair by his bed. Quatre turned his head so that he could see me. There were a few blonde strands scattered over the white pillowcase and the blanket; he was beginning to lose his hair.
"How are the others doing?" he asked quietly.
>
P
>
"As well as can be expected." I said. "Duo is becoming obsessive." I was more worried than I admitted. He rarely came back to the hotel any more, instead sleeping at the hospital or disappearing for extended periods of time without telling us what he was doing. "Trowa and Wufei are handling themselves fairly well so far."
>
P
>
Quatre nodded. "I'm sorry, Heero."
>
P
>
"For what?"
>
P
>
He closed his eyes. "I'm not smiling for you."
>
P
>
"Save them for Trowa and Duo...and Wufei. They're the ones that need to see it." I leaned back in the chair, crossing my arms over my chest. "We're both soldiers, Quatre."
>
P
>
"The others are, too."
>
P
>
"Aa." I shrugged. "Maybe you and I understand death the best."
>
P
>
Quatre laughed softly. "I should hope you do. You're the one sleeping with him."
>
P
>
"Idiot." I snorted.
>
P
>
He grinned for a minute before he sobered. "Do you think you could talk to Duo for me? I'd do it myself, but..."
>
P
>
"Talk to him about what?"
>
P
>
Quatre shrugged. "Just talk. He's going to explode."
>
P
>
I sighed. "If I can pin that idiot down long enough, I'll try."
>
P
>
There was a long silence, and for a moment, I thought that Quatre had at last fallen asleep, overwhelmed by the pain medication. "What's it like?"
>
P
>
"What?"
>
P

>
"Having someone that's completely in love with you?"
>
P
>
I raised my eyebrows. We were treading on ground that we had never touched
>
in our previous conversations. "You should know too." I finally said.
>
P
>
"Should I?" he sounded bemused.
>
P
>
"You have Trowa."
>
P
>
"True." he sighed. "I don't want to leave him."
>
P
>
"None of us want you to leave."
>
P
>
"I guess I don't have much of a choice, though, do I."
>
P
>
centerb* * */b/center
>
P
>
[Wufei]
>
P
>
I was surprised that Quatre hadn't tired of playing XiangQi yet. That was all we did when it was my turn to watch him. We laughed and chattered while we played, certainly, but it was meaningless. Quatre was always smiling. He was facing the end with strength that I would have never given him credit for; I was finding, however, that I hadn't really known him before. It was only now that I was becoming acquainted with Quatre as a person.
>
P
>
That only made it harder. I willed myself to be strong and to not care, or to face the impending loss with the same strength that Quatre was showing. I couldn't care; I'd already lost too much. I didn't want to lose another.
>
P
>
Quatre was the strongest, I was coming to realize. He was more controlled than any of us, with the sole exception of Yuy...and I was beginning to see cracks in Yuy's mask; the day before, he had gone out walking in the rain, and had not come back for several hours. He was disturbed and upset, even if he did not want to admit it to himself.
>
P
>
I would be strong like him, I decided, and not burden anyone else with whatever I might feel. I wouldn't feel grief, though, I had already told myself that. We were soldiers, and death was a part of life.
>
P
>
Even if the death was an injustice. The war was over; why did we continue to

>
die? I kept asking myself that question, as irrational as it sounded. We
>
were born already dying. But this...this slow wasting away...it wasn't
>
death, was it? It was torture.
>
P
>
Quatre and I tied; we were both distracted, I suppose. Shortly afterwards,
>
he fell asleep. A tiny, restless movement of his head sent something
>
skittering out from underneath his pillow; it hit the floor with a hollow,
>
plastic click. I bent to retrieve it. It was an orange bottle of pills.
>
P
>
Curiously, I read the label. My hand clenched around it so tightly that I
>
could hear the plastic creaking.
>
P
>
Paxil. [3]
>
P
>
centerb* * */b/center
>
P
>
[Duo]
>
P
>
I wandered in to the hotel suite we were all sharing. Quatre's sisters had
>
been nice enough to get it for us; it was the closest place to the hospital
>
that we could find. I hadn't been back in a while, though. I'd been spending
>
my nights on a couch in one of the waiting rooms, breathing in the
>
disgusting antiseptic smell. When I wasn't sleeping or wandering aimlessly
>
while the others took their turns, I sat and talked to him for hours and
>
hours like I was trying to cram what should have been the next forty or
>
fifty years of friendship into a couple of weeks. I couldn't take it any
>
more. I had to get away, for just a little while, or I'd go insane, and then
>
I would be even more useless than I already was.
>
P
>
I found Wufei practicing Shao Lin forms in the room he'd claimed. He'd
>
pushed all the furniture over to one wall and was slowly parading around the
>
room, working on his punches. I leaned in the doorway and watched him for a
>
minute. It was something normal. I needed to forget for just a couple
>
minutes. Then I could go back to the hospital and start again.
>
P
>
Wufei continued along the wall, then turned ninety degrees at the corner.
>
Punch, punch, block, step. Block, punch, punch, step. It was comforting. I'd

>
watched him do it for over a year now.
>
P
>
Block, step, punch, block, pause...
>
P
>
That wasn't right. He never did that...
>
P
>
Wufei suddenly turned, and his fist went streaking toward the wall. There
>
was a loud crunch...and then he was just standing there, with his arm
>
through the paint covered sheet rock. He was covered with white dust.
>
P
>
Slowly, he turned back to look at me as if he'd just noticed my presence,
>
pulling his fist out of the wall. He walked toward me.
>
P
>
I took a step back, and then another. The look in his eyes...scary. Fucked
>
up. Freaky. A thousand words couldn't describe it. He brushed past me,
>
leaving smears of white dust across my shirt and pants.

>
P
>
"I must not know my own strength." was all he said.
>
P
>
centerb* * */b/center
>
P
>
[Wufei]
>
P
>
It was raining outside. I walked along, uncaring as it mixed with the gypsum
>
dust that still coated my hair and my hands, turning it into a thin grey
>
slime.
>
P
>
I had to get away before I broke more than a wall.
>
P
>
It took a long time, walking in the pouring rain, before I found a place
>
that was suitable. There were trees, and I could see playground equipment in
>
the distance; a slide, swings, a merry-go-round. There were no children,
>
though, no one at all. It was too cool and wet for anyone to be outside.
>
P
>
Finally, I allowed my control to slip, just a little, and I threw back my
>
head and screamed.
>
P
>
/No justice!/
>
P
>
/The war was over! Why did we have to keep dying?/
>
P
>
/Why?/
>
P
>
/Why is there no justice?/
>
P
>
I screamed and screamed my empty words out into the empty wind

until I could
>
be strong again.
>
P
>
centerb* * */b/center
>
P
>
[Trowa]
>
P
>
I sat down on Quatre's bed and cradled his hand in mine. He was
awake, and
>
though he was smiling, his mouth was pinched. His joints were
swollen very
>
badly today; not even the narcotic painkillers the hospital was
giving him
>
could defeat his pain. Two days ago, he hadn't been able to
stand; he
>
couldn't walk any longer, and was forced to depend on others to
take care of
>
even his most base needs. It had to grate on his nerves, even if
he wasn't
>
showing it. His hand was thin in mine, much too thin. The doctors
had told me
>
that he now weighed less than thirty kilograms[4]. If I held him
too
>
tightly, his bones might snap under the pressure.
>
P
>
"Trowa," he said quietly. His voice was the only thing that
hadn't been
>
partially destroyed by the cancer. It was still as sweet as it
had always
>
been...but now, I thought I could detect a faint thickness in
it, the sound
>
of lungs that were beginning to strain.
>
P
>
"Yes?" I looked at him. His hair was beginning to fall out in
large patches,
>
baby fine blonde strands littering the pillow and his shoulders.
It was
>
painful to see; I could clearly remember how only a short time
ago, he had
>
been the most beautiful person I had ever seen, not just for his
looks, but
>
for his vitality.
>
P
>
"I love you," Quatre said.
>
P
>
I looked back up, fighting for control, fighting to keep from
being angry or
>
crying. I wanted to tell him that I loved him as well. I
couldn't. I
>
just...couldn't. Quatre didn't seem to be expecting an answer.
He just
>
smiled.
>
P
>
He was beautiful.
>
P
>
Was I to lose who I was again? I'd only just found him, and I
was still
>
hiding.
>
P
>
I bent over him and kissed him, very gently, on the lips, never

letting go
>
of his hand.
>
P
>
centerb* * */b/center
>
P
>
[Duo]
>
P
>
"Morning, Quatre!" I sang out with my best brand of false cheer
as I bounded
>
into his room. He opened his eyes and smiled at me.
>

>
"Good morning, Duo," he said.
>
P
>
Someone had put a vase of flowers on the tiny table by his bed.
"Nice," I
>
commented.
>
P
>
Quatre laughed. "Heero brought them in."
>
P
>
That gave me a moment's pause. I plopped down in the chair by
Quatre's bed
>
and looked over at him...and froze. All of his hair was gone.
There weren't
>
even any fallen strands on his pillow. Someone had swept them
away. His skin
>
was tight against the bones of his face and head; his cheeks had
sunken
>
enough that he was starting to look like a skeleton.
>
P
>
No. I couldn't think of Quatre like that.
>
P
>
"The rest of it fell out this morning," he said when he noticed
me staring.
>
P
>
I had to joke. I had to. It was joke or cry. "Isn't your head
cold now?"
>
P
>
He laughed. "Yes. A little."
>
P
>
I pulled my black baseball hat off. It had made it through the
war intact,
>
somehow, but it had been soaked, squashed, smashed, crumpled,
and battered
>
enough that it was softer than jeans that have gotten washed
thirty or forty
>
times, and completely shapeless. I gently settled it on Quatre's
head.
>
"There ya go," I said.
>
P
>
He laughed, again. "Great, now everyone's going to think I'm a
>
troublemaker."
>
P
>
I put a hand over my heart dramatically. "Stricken to the core!
Quatre,
>
you're MEAN!"
>
P
>
He laughed. "I must be getting better, then, if I'm feeling good
enough to
>
be mean," he closed his eyes.

>
P
>
Suddenly, I knew. I don't know how, but it finally struck home. He wasn't
>
ever going to get better. I was going to run out of laughter soon. Oh God, I
>
had to get out of there.
>
P
>
Jesus...how could I start thinking about things like that?

>
P
>
Quatre was dying.
>
P
>
centerb* * */b/center
>
P
>
[Trowa]
>
P
>
Quatre was asleep. I sat down on his bed and gently took his hand, as
>
always. Duo's ridiculous black hat was settled firmly on his head, and I
>
smiled despite myself.
>
P
>
"Quatre," I whispered, "I wish..."
>
P
>
I closed my eyes. It was too painful to say out loud.
>
P
>
/I wish for just a little while, you could hold me, and tell me that you're
>
going to be alright./
>
P
>
/Even if it is a lie./
>
P
>
/I wish.../
>
P
>
/I wish I could give you half of my life./
>
P
>
/I wish half of my worthless years would be yours, so you would at least
>
have a chance to live.../
>
P
>
/...with me.../
>
P
>
It hurt too much. It was a stupid, cruel little game I played with myself,
>
that wishing.
>
P
>
I sat there, for the rest of the night, and simply watched him sleep.
>
P
>
centerb* * */b/center
>
P
>
[Duo]
>
P
>
It was pouring rain when I ran from the hospital. I didn't stop to think. I
>
just went out into it, without even my coat, and ran and ran, like I was
>
going to escape the image of skeletal Quatre in the hospital bed.
>
P

>
I couldn't do it any more. I couldn't smile.
>
P
>
I couldn't smile!
>
P
>
/He's going to die./
>
P
>
/And there's nothing anyone can do./
>
P
>
/He's going to die, is dying right now, as I'm running through
the rain,
>
thinking these worthless things to myself, trying to make myself
feel
>
better./
>
P
>
/I don't have a right to be sad. Do I even really know him?/

>
P
>
/Am I crying for his sake? Or for mine? Or for Trowa's? Or for
his sisters'?
>
Or the Maganacs'? Or for all the people that are never going to
know him?/
>
P
>
/Sister Helen might say that it's just God calling him home.
FUCK GOD! He's
>
a selfish, uncaring bastard to deprive us of him! To deprive HIM
of
>
everything in life that he should have had!/
>
P
>
/He'll never be angry again. He'll never be happy again. He'll
never see the
>
sunset or the stars or get to home base with Trowa. We'll never
get to take
>
him out on his first legal bar crawl when he's twenty-one. He'll
never eat
>
cake on my birthday. He'll never know what it's like to grow old
with
>
someone he loves./
>
P
>
/How can he die?/
>
P
>
/How can he die??/
>
P
>
/HE NEVER HAD A CHANCE TO LIVE!!/
>
P
>
I ran until it was dark, and my braid was dragging my head down,
completely
>
soaked through with water. Then I ran more, trying to find an
escape,
>
something.
>
P
>
I don't know how I managed to find my way back to the hotel.
Pure homing
>
instinct, I guess. The guests shied out of my way as I half
staggered
>
through the lobby, toward the elevators. A bellhop tried to stop
me. I guess
>
he thought I was a vagrant or something. I shoved my card key in
his face,
>
stumbled into the elevator, and flipped him off as the doors
closed.

>
p
>
Fuck them ALL!
>
p
>
I stood in the elevator, shivering and dripping water all over the floor.
>
When it reached the penthouse suite level, I staggered drunkenly out, and
>
right into Heero's arms. He caught me more out of reflex than anything else,
>
and held me tightly when I tried to push him away.
>
p
>
I couldn't do this. Not any more.
>
p
>
All the strength left my body and I sagged in his arms.
>
p
>
Boys don't cry!
>
p
>
I was crying.
>
p
>
centerb* * */b/center
>
p
>
[Heero]
>
p
>
I didn't need to ask what was wrong. I held Duo tightly. He was shivering
>
like he was going to break apart, nearly hysterical sobs tearing themselves
>
from his throat. The baka was dripping water from every possible surface;
>
he'd obviously been out in the rain for a long time. He was so caught up in
>
his emotions that he didn't notice when I carried him into the bathroom and
>
dried him off, or when I put him in bed, then crawled in with him. He clung
>
to me like a lifeline; I held him so tightly that I was surprised he didn't
>
complain about not being able to breathe.
>
p
>
In a deep, secret part of myself, I felt relief so profound that it almost
>
brought tears to my eyes, that I wasn't losing Duo.
>
p
>
And for the first time in a long time, I felt ashamed.
>
p
>
centerb* * */b/center
>
p
>
[Trowa]
>
p
>
It was Duo's turn at the hospital; he hadn't gone for the last two days. I
>
wished that I could thank him, and tell him how hard I knew that it must be
>
for him, but I couldn't speak. I couldn't speak if I wanted to stay in
>
control.
>
p
>
Quatre's weight had fallen to twenty-four kilograms [5]. He had begun
>
vomiting profusely yesterday, and the doctors had finally

admitted defeat

>
and stopped treatment. The chemotherapy wasn't going to help him; nothing
>
could stop the cancer. All that was left was to make him comfortable until
>
the end, they said.

>
p

>
I let my eyes slide over to the phone. They would call, they said, when it
>
was time.

>
p

>
The thoughts weren't productive. I let my breath out slowly and returned my

>
attention to the task at hand. My sleeves were rolled up as far as they

>
could go; I was up to my elbows in soapy water. I had cooked yet another

>
meal that no one had eaten, and now I had to clean it up. I could have let

>
the hotel staff do it, but I had decided firmly against it. The suite had a

>
kitchen, and I would make good use of it. Menial, mind-numbing tasks,

>
however useless, were what I needed. I needed not to think. I needed to stay

>
in control.

>
p

>
There was a sharp pain, and I pulled my hand out of the water. Blood was

>
running freely from one of my fingers. Cautiously, I reached back into the

>
sink and retrieved the plate that I had been scrubbing. It was the next to

>
last; the rest of the hotel's dishes were already neatly stacked in the

>
drainer.

>
p

>
The plate's surface was marred where a chip had been knocked out of it.

>
Unusual.

>
p

>
Blood made thin and runny with water slid down across the white surface of

>
the plate. I watched it for a long moment before, very deliberately, I threw

>
the plate at the floor and watched it shatter, scattering pieces of white

>
porcelain across the tiles.

>
p

>
I reached for another plate.

>
p

>
centerb* * */b/center

>
p

>
[Wufei]

>
p

>
I paused in the middle of the form I was doing, idly licking sweat from my

>
upper lip. I needed this. I needed to concentrate on my body and think of

>
nothing else. Then I could be strong.

>
P
>
I cocked my head to one side, listening. Something had interrupted my
>
exercises, bringing me out of the half trance I had put myself in.
>
P
>
There it was again, the sound of something shattering. I walked quickly from
>
the spare room and toward the main suite. I sped my pace and headed for the
>
kitchen as the sound of more agonized smashing bled down the hall. Right
>
before I reached the kitchen, Heero intercepted me, his gun in his hand and
>
primed. I nodded to him and we ducked into the doorway.
>
P
>
The room was destroyed. Almost nothing was left on the counters, and broken
>
dishes and glasses littered the floor. In the midst of the wreckage stood
>
Trowa. He was breathing heavily, his eyes so wide that the whites were
>
visible all the way around. As we watched in shock, he grabbed a bowl from
>
the counter and flung it against the wall. The shards showered down on him,
>
one cutting his forehead open. Blood began to run thickly down his face.
>
P
>
"WHY?" he screamed, throwing another plate. "It's OVER! We don't have to die
>
any more!" he grabbed the kitchen table and overturned it, crushing a chair
>
under its bulk. "WHY?" he screamed again, grabbing another chair. He looked
>
in our direction wildly. I don't think he could even see us. With another
>
scream, he threw the chair.
>
P
>
That act pulled us out of our shock as Heero and I both ducked. I ran
>
forward, dodging another chair, and grabbed Trowa's arms. The taller boy
>
continued to scream, dragging me across the floor as he struggled. "Trowa!"
>
"Stop it!" I yelled. It did no good. He couldn't hear me.
>
"Heero!"
>
P
>
He was instantly on the other side of Trowa, grabbing his other arm more
>
securely. Between the two of us, we held him in one place while he raged.
>
P
>
This wasn't Trowa. It couldn't be.
>
P
>
"Trowa!" I yelled again. Heero drew back his free hand, having long since
>
dropped his gun, and slapped Trowa as hard as he could.
>
P
>
Trowa's eyes widened for a moment, the sanity returning to them,

and he

>
simply collapsed to his knees, pulling us down until we were kneeling on the

>
pile of sharp dish shards. There was blood everywhere...on the floor, on his

>
hands, running down his face and mixing with the tears that were flowing

>
from his eyes. He covered his face with his hands and sobbed, still held

>
between Heero and I.

>
P

>
centerb* * */b/center

>
P

>
[Heero]

>
P

>
I shook my head and closed the first aide kit back up. Between the two of

>
us, Wufei and I had gotten Trowa into his bed, bandaged him, and forced

>
tranquilizers into him. He was asleep now.

>
P

>
Wufei was leaning on the wall outside of Trowa's room. He nodded to me as I

>
came out. "Sleeping?"

>
P

>
"Aa."

>
P

>
Wufei nodded again. "Someone needs to clean up the kitchen," he said

>
quietly.

>
P

>
"Aa."

>
P

>
"We can't ask the hotel staff to do it."

>
P

>
"Aa."

>
P

>
We found buckets in a janitor's closet on the next floor down. The broken

>
dishes were too sharp to put in bags.

>
P

>
Once again, we were kneeling in the middle of the wreckage. My knees stung;

>
when Trowa had pulled us down, I must have sliced them open. It was a small

>
pain, something I could ignore.

>
P

>
/Pick up the shard. Put it in the bucket. Pick up another, careful of the

>
sharp edge. A tiny pain; nicked myself anyway. /

>
P

>
/My hands are trembling. Why are they trembling?/

>
P

>
/Pick up the broken glass.../

>
P

>
/Why are my hands shaking?/

>
P

>
/Ignore it; pick up another shard.../

>
P

>
/They're still shaking! Why?/

>
P
>
/Drop the glass in the bucket. It shatters./
>
P
>
/My arms are trembling now. They won't stop. Why? What's happening?/
>
P
>
I stared at my hands with fascination. They were shaking, harder and harder.
>
The tremors were moving up my arms, into my shoulders. I could feel my legs
>
trembling as well.
>
P
>
"Heero?" Wufei paused in the middle of picking up a set of broken tumblers.
>
"Heero? Are you all right?"
>
P
>
"Aa.." My voice sounded...afraid? What? I continued to look down at my hands.
>
There were tiny cuts all over my fingers, and blood was pooling in my palms.
>
Droplets of it began to spatter down on the floor.
>
P
>
/Why are my hands shaking?/
>
P
>
Wufei cursed, and suddenly, he was across the floor and his arms were around
>
my waist. I buried my head against his shoulder. I couldn't stop shaking.
>
Why?
>
P
>
"Wufei?" I asked. My voice sounded strange...
>
P
>
"It's okay, Heero..." he said. He was shaking too.
>
P
>
My eyes burned and stung. It felt strange. The fabric of Wufei's tank top
>
was getting damp under my cheek. "It's okay..." he said again.
Water
>
droplets...tears? were falling hotly on my shoulder.
>
P
>
/Why?/
>
P
>
centerb* * */b/center
>
P
>
[Trowa]
>
P
>
I stared up at the ceiling, my mind still fuzzy with the tranquilizers. I
>
couldn't understand it; why was I still feeling? The emptiness should have
>
eaten everything away.
>
P
>
I didn't want to feel.
>
P
>
My eyes burned, and I closed them. Why was I still doing this to myself? Why
>
couldn't I accept the inevitable in this situation like I had every time
>
before?
>
P

>
/I wish.../
>
P
>
Quatre was dying. There were no more wishes.
>
P
>
A dim sound jangled across my nerves, shredding away what was left of the
>
drug-induced lassitude. The phone. There was a pause, and then the door of
>
my dark room opened, letting in a tiny shaft of light.
>
P
>
"Trowa," Heero said.
>
P
>
"Yes."
>
P
>
"That was Duo. He says it's time."
>
P
>
I closed my eyes tightly for a moment and fought for control. "I know."
>
P
>
centerb* * */b/center
>
P
>
[Duo]
>
P
>
The rest of the guys arrived about ten minutes after I called them. Heero
>
and Wufei were looking as calm as always. Trowa, though, was pale...and he
>
had a bandage stuck on his forehead. I didn't ask. I didn't care.
>
P
>
We arranged ourselves around Quatre's bed. The only sound in the room was
>
his breath bubbling and rattling. No one's supposed to sound like that when
>
they breathe. The doctors had told me that the cancer had almost completely
>
eaten away his lungs now, and he'd caught pneumonia somewhere along the line
>
because his white blood cells were defective. Quatre's sisters had decided
>
not to put him on a respirator. They'd already said their good-byes...it
>
wouldn't be right to keep him any longer.
>
P
>
I wasn't even sure if he could really see us, at first. His eyes were open
>
wide as he struggled to breathe. He wanted to live.
>
P
>
Trowa gently lifted Quatre's almost skeletal body into his arms, and I took
>
Quatre's hand. I could see every bone, feel how brittle they were under his
>
too hot, papery skin.
>
P
>
Outside, I could hear someone crying out as if they were in agony; Rasid. I
>
could hear the dull murmur of people praying; the Maganacs. As if some
>
miracle would suddenly occur, and Quatre would be well again.

>
P
>
/Oh please God, give us a miracle./
>
P
>
/I'll never doubt you again./
>
P
>
/Please God, give us a miracle.../
>
P
>
I was making soft choking sounds, trying to keep back the tears that wanted
>
to leak from my eyes. Damnit. Quatre's fingers curled ever so slightly
>
around mine. I could see it in his eyes. He wanted to live...but there was
>
so much pain.
>
P
>
Trowa murmured something very softly to Quatre.
>
P
>
Quatre whispered back. He said, "Yes...it's beautiful. But..."

>
P
>
/Oh God, Oh God, please give us a miracle...Please...I'm
begging...I've
>
never begged before./
>
P
>
Trowa murmured again, and Quatre shut his eyes tightly, his face twisted
>
into a rictus of pain. His breath came harder, more unsteady with each
>
passing minute.
>
P
>
Then suddenly, he smiled, and didn't breathe again. His hand was now loose
>
in mine, boneless.
>
P
>
"No..." I said. "Damnit, Quatre, what are you playing at. You can't leave
>
us!" I tugged at his hand. I knew...I knew he couldn't hear

>
me...but...maybe...maybe...I tugged at his hand again. "You can't leave us.
>
Damnit man, this isn't funny. Stop it." I could hear my voice rising until I
>
was screaming hoarsely. "No! Damnit, stop playing! Stop it, Quatre! No! You
>
can't just leave like this! It's not supposed to happen this way! The
>
hero's...supposed..." I was breathing heavily now. My stomach hurt. My eyes
>
hurt. I hurt. "...supposed to...supposed to...ride of into the

>
fucking...sunset! DAMNIT!" I closed my eyes so tightly that brightly colored
>
sparks began to dance in my non-existent vision.
>
P
>
"DAMNIT!" I screamed again, still holding his hand. It was growing cold. I
>
let go of it suddenly. I didn't want to touch it. No. No. No. No....
>
P
>
I jerked away from the...shell...that used to be Quatre and

threw myself
>
willingly into the black, screaming darkness where I wouldn't have to feel
>
any more.
>
P
>
centerb* * */b/center
>
P
>
[Wufei]
>
P
>
"DAMNIT!" Duo screamed. He slid from his perch on Quatre's bed, falling down
>
into the space between the bed and the wall. His knees came up to his chest
>
and he curled up into a fetal ball, rocking slowly back and forth, clutching
>
his braid in his hands and crying like he would never stop. I glanced at
>
Heero, who stood at the foot of Quatre's bed. He was staring at nothing, his
>
eyes wide. Abruptly, he turned away and walked over to the window, legs
>
stiff.
>
P
>
For a moment, I wanted to yell at him, berate him for leaving Duo. For
>
leaving us.
>
P
>
But Duo wasn't the only one feeling pain.
>
P
>
I had to be strong. I had to show the same strength that Quatre had. He'd
>
only made a sound in pain once. My eyes were burning, my throat was closed
>
up so tightly that I knew I wouldn't have been able to speak even if I had
>
wanted to.
>
P
>
My XiangQi set was still under his bed, I knew. I would have to pick it up
>
when it was time to leave. We weren't going to ever play again. My cheeks
>
were damp.
>
P
>
We'd only just said hello a few short weeks before. It was wrong to be
>
parting ways already.
>
P
>
Slowly, I leaned forward and touched Quatre's limp hand. The thin, delicate
>
skin was cold under my fingertips.
>
P
>
He'd faced the end well.
>
P
>
centerb* * */b/center
>
P
>
[Heero]
>
P
>
/Soldiers have no feelings./
>
P
>
I turned away and walked toward the window, unable to watch any

longer as

>
Duo began to scream at Quatre. It was weak of me. Very weak.

>
P

>
/My hands are shaking again./

>
P

>
/Why?/

>
P

>
/My stomach hurts./

>
P

>
/Why?/

>
P

>
I stopped in front of the room's only window. I could see the other in dim

>
reflection; Trowa, still holding Quatre's corpse, unmoving. Duo, falling off

>
the bed and curling up in the corner. Wufei, reaching forward to touch

>
Quatre's hand.

>
P

>
I could hear Duo wailing, softly, like a lost child. I wanted to go over to

>
him, and hold him tightly, reassure myself that he was still real, still

>
alive.

>
P

>
I couldn't.

>
P

>
/Soldiers have no feelings./

>
P

>
My hands were clutching the windowsill so hard that it creaked. My knuckles

>
were white. Deliberately, I turned my gaze out, to what was beyond the

>
window. There were clouds in the sky, but for the first time in

>
days, it wasn't going to rain in the afternoon. There were acres of green

>
grass outside the window, neatly trimmed, and trees that were just now in

>
full leaf. I could see people walking, or sitting outside in wheelchairs to

>
enjoy the watery sunlight.

>
P

>
Duo was still crying.

>
P

>
I glanced down at my hands, still clutching the windowsill, and watched as

>
hot droplets of water shattered on my knuckles.

>
P

>
/I feel sick./

>
P

>
centerb* * */b/center

>
P

>
[Trowa]

>
P

>
I could feel Quatre struggling in my arms, fighting to breathe, fighting to

>
live. We both knew that it was a useless reflex of the dying; he couldn't

>
win.
>
P
>
We couldn't win.
>
P
>
I wished that I could breathe for him, that if I held him
tightly enough,
>
we'd melt into one and he could be whole and strong again. I
would never let
>
go.
>
P
>
It hurt too much. I was too empty. Always empty. "Quatre," I
murmured softly
>
into his ear, "can you see the end?"
>
P
>
His eyes widened, and he took in a choking breath. "Yes," he
whispered. His
>
voice was weak. It hurt to hear. "It's beautiful. But..."

>
P
>
/I wish.../
>
P
>
I closed my eyes tightly against the pain, pressing my cheek
against his.
>
"Let go, Quatre." I whispered to him. "Just let go."
>
P
>
I held him tightly as he shook and struggled, until I felt his
face move,
>
and he smiled, then was still.
>
P
>
I held him until there was nothing left.
>
P
>

>
P
>
centerb* * */b/center
>
P
>

>

>

>

>
[1] Metastasis--when cancer spreads to other parts of the body,
forming
>
"satellite" tumors.
>
P
>
[2] XiangQi is what is known as "Chinese Chess" a two-player
game that's
>
very difficult and involves even more strategy, planning, and
sheer
>
brainpower than regular chess, in my opinion.
>
P
>
[3] Paxil is a very powerful antidepressant
>
P
>
[4] Quatre's normal weight is about 90 lbs, for anyone that
can't imagine
>
the metric system. 30 kilograms is about 66 lbs.
>
P
>
[5] 24 kilograms is about 53 lbs.

End
file.